



Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE *109th* CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2006

Senate

IM MEMORIAM OF CORETTA SCOTT KING

Mr. President, I rise today to honor the life of Coretta Scott King, who peacefully left this world on Monday, January 30, 2006 at the age of 78.

Coretta Scott King was born on April 27, 1927, in Marion, Alabama, during a time of great social injustice. Despite the many barriers that society had placed in front of her, she refused to let hate and prejudice stand in the way of her dreams. She was valedictorian of her graduating class at Lincoln High School and went on to receive a B.A. in music and education from Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio. She also earned a degree in voice and violin at Boston University's New England Conservatory of Music. It was during this time that she met Martin Luther King, Jr. who was then studying for his doctorate in systematic theology at Boston University. They married on June 18, 1953, and began their lives together in Montgomery, Alabama.

As Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. began his civil rights work, Mrs. King worked closely with him by organizing marches and arranging sit-ins at segregated restaurants to draw attention to the unfairness of Jim Crow laws. She also

played a central role behind the scenes of many of the major civil rights campaigns of the 1950's and 1960's. She was by her husband's side when he received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964 and walked by his side during the infamous march from Selma to Montgomery in 1965 that eventually led to the passage of the Voting Rights Act. Mrs. King also performed in "Freedom Concerts" where she would sing songs and read poetry to help raise money for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the organization that Dr. King led during the civil rights movement.

Following her husband's death on April 4, 1968, Mrs. King demonstrated remarkable strength and courage by continuing the struggle to bring equality to all Americans. She established the Atlanta-based Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change as a living memorial to her husband and his dream of social equality. During the 1980s, Mrs. King participated in a series of sit-in protests to highlight the inequality of South Africa's racial policies.

Mrs. King also led the campaign to establish Dr. King's birthday as a national holiday. In 1983, Congress instituted the Martin Luther King, Jr. Federal Holiday Commission, which she chaired during its duration. And on January 20, 1986, the nation celebrated the first Martin Luther King, Jr. Federal Holiday.

Mrs. King has received honorary doctorates from more than 60 colleges and universities; has authored three books and has served on, and helped found, dozens of organizations including the Black Leadership Forum, the National Black Coalition for Voter Participation, and the Black Leadership Roundtable.

I rise today to celebrate the life and accomplishments of Mrs. Coretta Scott King. As wife, mother, social activist, musician, and author, she used her words and actions to spread the message of racial equality and justice throughout the world. I hope that her vision, as well as the vision of her late husband, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., will continue to live on in all of us through our work and our deeds.